

But GOD...

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[0 : 00] Is it well with your soul? Yes. How many of... Yes, sir.

How many are these of yours? I'm glad that you're here.

We have been walking through the book of Ephesians, and we are in chapter 2 at this point, where Paul describes what happens when we're saved.

He goes into detail as to what we are saved from, what we are saved out of, where we were before God moved and acted.

And so the last couple of weeks, we were looking at the condition of where we were before Christ came into our life. And now today we get the good news.

[1 : 17] So we've been looking at the bad news. Now we get the good news. We get the good news of what God has done. Get to the gospel. But the gospel includes the bad news. I don't know if you know that, because it's not good news without understanding the bad news.

So we're in Ephesians 2, as I said. So take out your Bibles with me and turn to the book of Ephesians, chapter 2. You'll find it right after Galatians, right before Philippians and Colossians. Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, also known as Gentiles, eat pork chops, taking the first letter of each book.

Okay. We're in the Ephesians part, which is also after Corinthians and Romans. So I want to read verses 1 through 8.

But we're going to focus on verses 4 and 5 today. So if you're able, please stand in honor of the reading of God's word. Amen. Paul writing to the Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 1.

[2 : 22] And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.

Among them, we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest.

But God. But God, being rich in mercy, because of his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our transgressions, God made us alive together with Christ.

By grace you have been saved, and raised us up with him, and seated us with him in the heavenly places, in Christ Jesus. In order that in the ages to come, he might show the surpassing riches of his grace and kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God.

[3 : 55] So reads his word. Let us pray. Father, give us eyes to see today, and hearts to receive, and ears to hear the good news, what you have done, what you alone have done, by grace alone have done.

This we ask in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Out of the shadows, bound by the gallows, the dead man walking, to love came calling, rise up, rise up, rise up.

Rise up. Six feet under, I thought it was over, an answer to a prayer, the voice of the Savior, rise up.

Rise up. Mm. All at once, I came alive, this beating heart, these open eyes, the grave let go, the darkness should have known.

Amen. You're still rolling stone. I once was blinded, but now I see it. I heard about the power, and now I believe it.

[5 : 34] Rise up. Rise up. Rise up. Rise up. Rise up. I thought that I was too far gone For everything that I've done wrong Yeah, I'm the one who dug this grave But you called my name You called my name All at once I came alive This beating heart These open eyes The grave let go The darkness should have known You're still rolling stones That's a song called Still Rolling Stones sung by Lauren Daigle one of my favorite Christian artists wonderful lyrics and gosh it goes with what

we're looking at today but God two words of profound significance two words that change everything but God in Genesis 8

God flooded the earth he blotted out all life because men were evil but God remembered Noah and all who were on the ark Abraham lied about Sarah as a result she was taken into a harem of a foreign king but God intervened and saved her Joseph you remember Joseph sold into slavery suffers unjustly at the result of his brothers who hated him at the end he said to his brothers you intended it for evil but God intended it for good

Psalms 73 the writer says my flesh and my heart may fail but God is the strength of my heart they crucified Jesus and they put him in a grave but God raised him from the dead we could go on and on but God the same words Paul uses to show God's remedy for our ruin in sin today we want to understand the why does God save sinners and how does God save sinners we looked at the first three verses in Ephesians 2 we see the dark picture that Paul paints he diagnoses the condition of unsaved man of unbelievers he says they are dead in their sins they have no spiritual life no spiritual response secondly they're dominated by external evils both by the world they follow the course of the world and they follow the course of Satan himself though they don't know it thirdly they're enslaved to their own inner lust so they have external influences and internal influences they're indulging the pleasures of the flesh and the mind and then finally ultimately they are children of wrath they are under the wrath of God deserving the wrath of God so we understand what God is saving us from all these conditions when we come to these next verses

I want to ask the question what is the essence of Christianity what's the heart of Christianity if you were to say in one sentence what Christianity is where would you pinpoint the essence the heart of it is it that you stop doing certain things God has changed me that's a true thing is it an issue of behavior that your behavior has changed is it about you is that the issue issue issue isn't essence I'll get it of Christianity do you think in terms of what you attempt and strive to do is that the essence is it about doing I think the essence of Christianity is summarized by Paul in verses 4 and 5 but God being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us even when we were dead in our transgressions made us alive together with Christ by grace you have been saved sola gratia saved by grace alone through faith alone we'll get to that in Christ alone grace alone faith alone Christ alone is our salvation to the glory of God alone sola sola and sola scriptura according to the scripture alone so let's dig into this what is this so Paul had given a painted a dark picture for us of where we were and now he brightens he paints more brightly now we have a contrast where grace is applied the remedy of a merciful God the good news so we focus today on why and how does God remedy the hopeless ruin of sinful people he answers two questions why why does God save sinners in verse four and then how verse five how does he save sinners what does he do so question one why does God save sinful people what is his reason what is his motivation what is his basis on what basis does he save people two causes

[12 : 27] Paul says verse four he is rich in mercy and because of his great love it's the cause of his great mercy his rich mercy the Old Testament word for for for mercy is kindness to the lowly kindness to the lowly it's an overwhelming and unexpected compassion to those who are miserable and afflicted that's mercy mercy is withholding what we deserve we ask for mercy when we're under judgment when we're under condemnation we ask for mercy we ask God to withhold what we deserve so that's mercy when Hagar fled from Sarah God heard her crying and he took compassion on her he had mercy on her and he comforted her and he encouraged her

Hagar not Abraham's wife God heard her cry Jonah now Jonah wasn't thankful for God's mercy Jonah complained about God's mercy because he preached remember to Nineveh and they repented and God had mercy on Nineveh and Jonah the great prophet complained because Nineveh was not getting what they deserved God's withholding what they deserve we see this word mercy but in the life of Jesus he was criticized he was criticized remember for what he was criticized for many things but the primary thing that Jesus was criticized for was being a friend of sinners hanging out with sinners the sickly the unwanted the unaccepted and so when he was criticized by this he told his critics to go and read

Hosea 6 6 go and learn what Hosea says go and learn what this means he said go and learn what this means I just quotes Isaiah excuse me Hosea 6 6 I desire mercy and not sacrifice which is a striking statement because there's a whole book in the Old Testament on sacrifice and God says I prefer I desire I want mercy not sacrifice not ritual not going through motions I want mercy I want compassion I want this kindness to the lowly and then Jesus explained his mission as

a result of that verse he says I did not come to call the righteous but I came to call sinners I didn't come to call righteous people who already think that they're okay who think that they've got it together who don't think they need mercy I didn't come for the righteous no good news for righteous people the gospel is only for sinners who can't fix themselves who desperately need a savior not just somebody to help us along but somebody to rescue us absolutely and that's who Jesus targets his whole life are sinners that is the same target of the church our target is not to get other people that all look the same and all you know have it together a target group of sinners people who can't fix themselves people who can't get it together people whose lives are messy and have messed it up over and over again that's the target that's what

Jesus said and then the second cause he says why does God save sinners one because he's rich in mercy secondly because he has a great love not just love but he has a great love with which he loved us we're reminded of the verse that everybody knows John 3 16 God so loved the world who's the world sinners that he sent his son the world's in trouble God so loved the world that he sent his only begotten son that whoever believes in him may not perish may not be ruined but have eternal life and have life that knows God himself he does not say that he loves us because we're lovable but think of what Paul has said already who does he love he loves the people who are dead in their transgressions and sins who can't do anything who follow after the world who follow after the devil who are enslaved to their own lusts and passions who are stuck and ultimately are under the wrath of

God that's who he loves not the lovable but the lost people and how does God describe this love what is this love what does this word mean in later in Ephesians 5 2 he tells us Paul says be imitators of God and walk in love well what does that look like walk in love just as Christ loved you how did Christ love me he gave himself up for us an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma that tells me a number of things about love the kind of love he's talking about it's a love that gave himself as a sacrifice an offering it's sacrificial he gave himself for us which means it's aimed at other people not self it's a love for others and it's a love that meets need because I had the need to be rescued he gave himself up for us a sacrifice an offering that's what love is

[19:06] God loved by sacrificing God loved by giving himself his son his son gave himself for 33 years on earth walking every moment in obedience to the father in communication with the father and then laying down his life not easily because in the garden he had to pray three times take this cup but not my will he had to battle that power in suffering that's love so why does God save sinners he has great rich mercy and great love mercy and love are acts of God they're they're acts of God because it is who God is it's what defines him it's his glory remember

Moses after the whole thing with the calf remember he goes up on the mountain he comes down the people are partying right they're partying they're already they've already gone astray they said they'd follow God and 40 days later they're already making another God and they're partying worshiping another God Moses comes down and it's right after that that Moses says because he has this intense prayer session with the Lord Moses got to speak face to face and Moses a little bit he had a little anger problem Moses did but he talks to the Lord and he says okay I got to see your glory if we're going to go on with this I got to see your glory please show me your glory make this worth it for me I want to see you and so God says okay I'll show you my glory remember and he takes him and he puts him in the cleft of a rock and he hides his face as he walks by and here's the description in

Exodus 34 the Lord descended in the cloud and stood with Moses there and proclaimed the name of the Lord the Lord passed before Moses and proclaimed the Lord Yahweh Yahweh a God merciful and gracious slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness keeping steadfast love for thousands by forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin but who will by no means clear the guilty visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation why does God save sinners because he is a God full of mercy he abounds in love for thousands and he shows his love by forgiving the unforgivable by forgiving the very kinds of sins that the Old Testament sacrifices did not atone for iniquity transgression and sin he names all three kinds of sins sin is just the falling short kind of sin that's the generic one that's the one that there were sacrifices for when you sin unknowingly you can offer sacrifices for that one you touched a dead body or you you know you did something you weren't intending to do wasn't intentional and then transgression well what's that transgress cross the line right to trespass where God had drawn the line you intentionally stepped over that line so David right adultery murder how

many of the Ten Commandments did he break with Bathsheba and following lying coveting transgression and then he says he is so loving that he actually forgives iniquity you know what iniquity is so you got the regular sin then you got transgression the intentional sin then you have iniquity that's the perverted kind that's the not just crossing the line but really messing it up I don't know what you call it you know there's all that's he just God just calls it iniquity twist twisted stuff even that the the worst of the worst he forgives that's how loving he is that's how abounding his love is that's how steadfast his love is even for Israelites who had no means of a sacrifice anything that they could do except for the mercy of God the mercy that's what David cried Psalm 51 mercy be merciful if there was a sacrifice I bring it there's no sacrifice I can bring so please have mercy and God did why does God save sinners because he is full of mercy and he abounds in love for sinners God loves sinners does that sound right God loves sinners that's why we're here that's the only reason we're here his love and his mercy our salvation is caused by God's mercy and his love not by anything in us not by anything that we have done what causes what moves God to save is his mercy and love so first question why does God save sinful people because he's rich in mercy and God has great love for sinners and he's moved by love and mercy by what does God save how does God save what is the manner by which God saves how does he remedy our situation so he's moved by love and mercy but what does he do what does he do to rescue us from our deadness from our enslavement from our captivity captivity to the evil one to the captivity to our own sinful desires well there's two parts [25 : 54] Paul gives a verse five first he says introduces it with even when we were dead and then he says he made us alive together with Christ so two parts first part is the what would you call this in a contract the preamble or the I don't know even though you're dead in sin even when we were dead and Paul actually uses the the verb present even while you're ours what even while you're still dead so in other words how does God save us without any help from us first of all because you're dead what is dead mean not physically dead but spiritually dead you have no sensitivity you have no way to see no way to hear no way to understand it's not that we can't understand words not that we can't understand Jesus is spoke to people who didn't believe him they understood some of the things he was saying but they did not receive that he did not really understand it even his disciples didn't totally understand what he's talking about especially in terms of his messiah as a messiah so they were dead they were completely helpless they're unable to do anything to save themselves even when you're dead so before we did anything we are not saved because we did something he says at the end of verse five by grace right by grace you have been saved by grace by grace alone it's all of God so whereas mercy withholds what we deserve grace gives us what we don't deserve so so see the two work together mercy mercy takes away the wrath that we deserve grace gives us the gift of salvation that we don't deserve it's that what Luther talked about on the cross the great exchange right we give him our sin he takes our sins and he gives us his righteousness it's not just that he forgives our sin that's only half of it the other part is that now he gives his righteousness to us we're justified by grace you have been saved and Paul uses one of my favorite grammatical verb it's a it's a perfect passive verb isn't that wonderful you love I love it when there's a perfect passive because it's a perfect verb it's just perfect it has been done and it continues to have effect that's perfect it's not just present like you're being saved it is you have been saved and you continue to be saved that's perfect and then it's passive passive means I'm not doing it it's being done to me I'm receiving it I have been saved God has done the work and he has made it perfect so what does God do he says that he made us alive even when we're dead our trust transgressions he made us alive he moved he worked the first remedy first he remedies the condition

of our spiritual death we were dead now we're alive you were dead now you're alive you've been raised right and he even says that not only have you been made alive verse 5 but verse 6 you've also been raised up with Christ and seated with him we'll get into that next week oh boy not just alive but raised and seated what is that that's good enough to be alive in he acted so that what was dead is now alive the Bible uses different words for this we call it regeneration we call it being born again remember well first Peter says blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has caused us to be born again I mean Peter's just direct with that line he's caused us to be born again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead it's one of the benefits of his resurrection remember John 3 remember

Nick at night remember that John chapter 3 Nick comes to Nicodemus comes to Jesus at night so it's Nick at night it's the original and and they have the spiritual conversation and and Jesus talks

about how Nicodemus is the teacher of Israel so he he must be a high-up rabbi guy but but so Jesus says to him you must be born again or literally he said you must be born from above and Nicodemus is thinking literally he's thinking physically you he says you what are you talking it's gibberish you can't go back into your mother's womb and be born again what are you talking about born again and Jesus says you know you're the you're the teacher of Israel you don't get this kind of teacher are you Nick Nicodemus Jesus treats it like it's basic unless you're born from above you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven you can't even enter the kingdom of heaven unless you're born again unless you experience this regeneration this new birth unless you're born of the spirit that which is born of flesh is flesh that which is born of spirit is now spirit a new life so we have the old flesh life now we're given a new spirit life that's where we have a little competition going on right in our lives we have some friction going on because our old life still has these ingrained habits and desires that we're fighting against but we have this new power we have this spiritual life in fact we have the spirit himself indwelling us life from above a new creation so this is a supernatural work of God you do you realize when you're saved it's a miracle it's not a normal transaction some preachers talk about it as if it's a normal transaction if you pray this prayer you'll be saved didn't work for me now a lot most of you know it worked for me thousands of times seriously every week I was convicted I went forward prayed the prayer with the pastor went away to camp to the stick in the fire giving my life to Jesus he's going to change me cleanse me next day just as guilty and full of shame and no peace no joy full of my old hatred so it's not a normal it's a it's a miracle when God finally saved me I was under conviction for years and years I labored to believe I tried to believe I just just really believe heart seriously I mean I labored get that I gotta get the I'm not doing it right I need to read Billy

Graham bless his heart no no no no no criticism Billy Graham except for his methodology it's a miracle it's a supernatural work it is a sudden change that's why I had that song right all at once I came alive this beating heart these open eyes the grave let go and he's still rolling stone wasn't to a prayer I made it wasn't to I had been praying for years it's a miracle when God formed Adam what did he do he wasn't done he's a model of clay right he forms him of the dust forms him and what did he do he breathed life into and he became a living soul a living soul in fact he became an eternal soul all of our souls are eternal became a living soul here's how Paul describes it in Titus 3 he talks about our condition what we were and then what God did he says for we ourselves were once foolish disobedient led astray slaves to various passions and pleasures passing our days in malice and envy hated by others and hating one another wasn't that fun you remember that hating and envious disobedient rebellious but there it is he is but God but when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared he saved us not because of works done by us in righteousness not because we did anything but according to his own mercy there it is it's his loving kindness and his mercy according to his own mercy by or through the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life Paul has long sentences because of his love and according to his mercy he saved us by the washing of regeneration by the washing of regeneration God acted by giving us by by rebirthing us by regenerating us by transforming us that's how we're saved we're born again we have new life a radical translate transformation a creation we're called a new creation in Christ brand new creation so what are the signs of new life how do I know if I've experienced that how do you know don't say because you prayed a prayer lots of people pray a prayer doesn't work to save you as the instrument to save you don't stop praying I don't hear me wrong pray pray pray absolutely ask Jesus in your heart do all that just but keep doing it until you know he's changed until you know he's come

okay that's what I had to learn how do you know what changes what are the signs of new life your eyes are open to truth you start to see and understand things you never saw before your ears are open now you can actually hear the word of God and you want to hear the word of God instead of hating the word of God your heart is changed from the desires of the flesh to the desires of the spirit one of the most radical things for me was I didn't say it out loud but I hated God and I hated the church and I hated the whole thing that was the old me when I was changed I loved God how do you do that go from hating God to loving God and to love the church and to love people and to love [39 : 14] I mean that's that wasn't me that's new and the values changed I wanted to do the things of God I wanted to serve God instead of I had to serve God because you know I was a never mind I mean I did stuff you know did stuff everybody thought I was a Christian so those are the signs of a

new life have you experienced this so can I meddle for just a minute have you experienced this salvation have you experienced new life do you have new life do you know that God has done something in you to change you to change you at your core change your values and your hopes and your dreams do you now see things in the word of God that you never saw before do you are you now able to hear God through his word do you have new desires and new values whereas you value things of the world now you value things of God now you want to obey you desire to serve God and please God and to hear his word and to love others can you say like Paul

I once was foolish disobedient lost a slave to my lust hating others but God saved me made me alive and now I yearn to serve him and love his children I yearn to do that I don't always do it well but I yearn to do that I am not saved because I did something I am saved because he did something I was dead but God but God let us pray we thank you for your word we thank you for Paul's testimony that he he doesn't just give us a generic look at what life is like before Christ he digs and he understands diagnosis how bad off we were though at the time we did not know but now Lord we give you praise because when you make us alive when you change us when you when you transform us because of your love and your mercy oh God we want to worship you we want to honor you we want to walk with you and so today for those of us that have forgotten that renew in us a spirit of gratefulness and for those

Father today that you may be speaking to for the first time you may be awakening in their hearts and minds you may be convicting them you may be drawing them you may be teaching them I don't know but I pray oh Father that your spirit would do his work to do what only you can do to awaken to make alive in Christ this is what we pray in Christ's name Amen